

I claim:

1 1. An occupant restraint mechanism disposed between a rigid member
2 and an instrument panel of an automotive vehicle, said occupant restraint
3 mechanism comprising:

4 first and second brackets each extending between proximal ends fixedly
5 secured to the rigid member and distal ends coupled to the instrument panel, one of
6 said first and second brackets having at least one notch formed therein, said notch
7 having a predetermined size to allow a predetermined amount of deformation of
8 said first and second brackets during contact of an occupant with the instrument
9 panel during a sudden deceleration of the vehicle.

1 2. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 1, wherein
2 said notch is formed in at least one of said outer and inner walls of said first and
3 second brackets to allow a predetermined amount of deformation of said first and
4 second brackets during contact of an occupant with the instrument panel during
5 sudden deceleration of the vehicle.

1 3. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 2, wherein
2 each of said first and second brackets includes a web extending between said outer
3 and inner walls defining a generally U-shaped cross section.

1 4. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 2, wherein
2 each of said outer and inner walls extends between an open edge and said web.

1 5. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 4, wherein
2 said notch is formed along said open edge and extends in a concave manner
3 toward said web.

1 6. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 5, wherein
2 each of said first and second brackets extends arcuately between said proximal and
3 distal ends.

1 7. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 6, wherein
2 each of said first and second brackets includes a flange formed at each of said
3 proximal ends thereof to allow said first and second brackets to be welded to the
4 rigid member.

1 8. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 7, wherein
2 each of said first and second brackets includes an end wall defining each of said
3 distal ends thereof and extending between said outer and inner walls and said web,
4 said end walls adapted to be fixedly secured to the instrument panel.

1 9. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 8, wherein
2 each of said end walls includes an aperture formed therein to allow said distal ends
3 of said first and second brackets to be fixedly secured to the instrument panel.

1 10. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 9, wherein
2 one of said pair of brackets is positioned in the vicinity of the occupant's knees to
3 minimize intrusion of the knees through the instrument panel.

1 11. An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 10, wherein
2 one of said pair of brackets is disposed below the other such that the pair of
3 brackets deform in a successive manner to minimize during contact between the
4 occupant's knees and the instrument panel during sudden deceleration of the
5 vehicle, thereby minimizing loading of the occupant's femurs.